

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method for soft-programming an electrically erasable nonvolatile memory device, comprising:

performing a first soft-programming with a first soft-programming multiplicity in given operating conditions; and

performing a second soft programming with a second soft-programming multiplicity differing from the first soft-programming multiplicity in the case where said given operating conditions are not present.

2. (Original) The soft-programming method according to claim 1 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is greater than the one used for writing data in the memory device.

3. (Original) The soft-programming method according to claim 1 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is twice the one used for writing data in the memory device.

4. (Original) The soft-programming method according to claim 1 wherein said second soft-programming multiplicity is smaller than said first soft-programming multiplicity.

5. (Original) The soft-programming method according to claim 1 wherein said second soft-programming multiplicity is equal to the one used for writing data in the memory device.

6. (Original) The soft-programming method according to claim 1 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is used in the case where the current absorbed during soft-programming carried out with said first soft-programming multiplicity meets a given relation.

7. (Original) The soft-programming method according to claim 6 wherein said relation is defined by the condition that the current absorbed during soft-programming carried out with said first soft-programming multiplicity is either smaller or equal to a threshold current.

8. (Original) The soft-programming method according to claim 6 wherein said threshold current is equal to the maximum current which is available for the writing operations and which can be generated within the memory device.

9. (Original) An electrically erasable nonvolatile memory device, characterized by soft-programming means operating with a first soft-programming multiplicity in given operating conditions and with a second soft-programming multiplicity differing from the first soft-programming multiplicity in the case where said given operating conditions are not present.

10. (Original) The memory device according to claim 9 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is greater than the one used for writing data in the memory device.

11. (Original) The memory device according to claim 9 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is twice the one used for writing data in the memory device.

12. (Original) The memory device according to claim 9 wherein said second soft-programming multiplicity is smaller than said first soft-programming multiplicity.

13. (Original) The memory device according to claim 9 wherein said second soft-programming multiplicity is equal to the one used for writing data in the memory device.

14. (Original) The memory device according to claim 9 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is used in the case where the current absorbed during soft-programming carried out with said first soft-programming multiplicity meets a given relation.

15. (Original) The memory device according to claim 14 wherein said relation is defined by the condition that the current absorbed during soft-programming carried out with said first soft-programming multiplicity is smaller or equal to a threshold current.

16. (Original) The memory device according to claim 14 wherein said threshold current is equal to the maximum current which is available for the writing operations and which can be generated within the memory device.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (New) A method for soft-programming an electrically erasable nonvolatile memory device, comprising:

performing a first soft-programming of a first plurality of memory cells simultaneously; and

performing a second soft-programming of a second plurality of memory cells simultaneously that is fewer than the first plurality of memory cells if the current drawn during the first soft programming is equal to or greater than a threshold amount; and

performing a third soft-programming of a third plurality of memory cells simultaneously that is equal in number to the first plurality of memory cells if the current drawn during the first soft programming is less than the threshold amount.

19. (New) The method of claim 18 wherein the first plurality is 32 bits that are soft-programmed simultaneously and the second plurality is 16 bits that are soft programmed simultaneously.

20. (New) The method of claim 18 wherein the threshold amount of current is the maximum current the circuit can generate during a programming step.

21. (New) The method of claim 18 wherein the first plurality that are soft-programmed simultaneously is double the number bits that the programming system has the power capability of programming during a normal program step.